



## Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

*...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland*



# Learning from Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland?

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# Evolving Policy in Scotland

**Pre-Devolution:** No formal policy framework

**2002:** Cross-Party Working Group on Possible Legislation to Tackle Religious Hatred in Scotland concluded that “there were strong arguments for legislation but these should not overshadow the need for changes in practice, culture and attitudes to combat religious prejudice on a wider front.”

**2003:** Review of Marches and Parades (Orr Report)

**2005:** Summit on Sectarianism (Football Summit)

**2006:** Action Plan – Football Banning Orders. Small scale funding for community interventions. Old Firm Alliance

**2007:** Role for Councils in regulating marches and parades in Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006

**2009:** Former First Minister expresses regret at not passing legislation



# Politics and Sectarianism since 2011

**2011:** Massive media attention over behaviour at Old Firm Game (Lennon/McCoist) and bullets sent to Neil Lennon

**2012:** Offensive Behaviour Act

**2012:** Community-Based Approach.

**2012:** Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism established:

- 3 pillars: Research, Practice, Leadership.
- 3 partners: Community, Govt., Institutions.
- 2 Core Questions:

“What is Sectarianism in modern Scotland?”

“What should be done to tackle it?”

30 month process: Explore, Report, Mainstream.



# Approach

- Beyond Silence and the Megaphone: Evidence-based, values-led.
- Civic Engagement: Independent advice, political consensus.
- Detailed exploration, monitoring and advice
- Advise and support practice development: £2.5m per annum (x4) from Scottish Government: Community, Campaign, Youth, Church, Prisons, Football, Drama, Culture, Minority, Gender, Social Media, Resource Development.
- Absence of research data: culture of avoidance?
- Commissioning of Academic research, both Quantitative (Census analysis, SSA, Youth Attitudes) and Qualitatives (Marches and Parades, Community Experience, Gender)
- Engage: Local Government, Football, Churches, Education, Police, Politics, Parading Organisations, Public.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Research, Practice, Story-telling



# What is sectarianism in Scotland and why does it matter?

## Definition

Sectarianism in Scotland is a mixture of perceptions, attitudes, actions, and structures that involves overlooking, excluding, discriminating against or being abusive or violent towards others on the basis of their perceived Christian denominational background. This perception is always mixed with other factors such as, but not confined to, politics, football allegiance and national identity.

- Glass Ceilings (Equality) - Structures, Disadvantage, Exclusions.
- Glass Bottles (Violence) - Hostility, Violence, Immigration, Locality,
- Glass Curtains (Cohesion and interdependence) - Communities, Separations, Education, Integration and Assimilation

Evolving pattern of hostile relationship that varies by Locality, Age, Class, Gender



# Research findings

- Attitudes: 88% thought it was a problem (SSA)
- A problem in West of Scotland and pockets
- Many fewer reported sectarian incidents themselves
- Economic differences appear to be declining
- Hate crime and OBA suggest incidents in both directions
- 14% report religious prejudice
- Acute sensitivity in the West of Scotland Catholic community
- What contributes?: Football (88%), Parades (79-70%), Schools, Social Media, Churches.
- You Gov poll in 2015 showed 83% of Scots support legislation to tackle offensive behaviour at football and 80% polled directly support the Act. Research on fans attitudes found that 90% regarded songs which glorify or celebrate the loss of life or serious injury offensive, 82% found songs in support of terrorist organisations offensive, 85% found songs, chants and shouting about people's religious background or beliefs offensive.
- Referendum suggests end of political divide, but new divides with an isolated ,specifically 'loyalist' working class.
- Increasing social integration:30% of Catholics and 18% of Protestants have a family member who is from 'the other' community, while over 75% report friendship across this division.



# Advisory Group Outcomes

- Consensus for change
- Improving trends: need to move towards a normalisation within equality, hate crime, human rights and community development
- Sufficient Legislation: Equality, HR, Hate Crime, OBA.
- Sustained Political leadership: Lead, Monitor, Resource, Legislate.
- Identifying Institutional leadership: Local Government, Education, Police, Equalities and HR.
- Critical social leadership: Football, Church, Youth, Culture, Media.
- Permissive environments for violence: football and social media.
- Residual exclusion: evidence based approach within equalities framework.
- Investing in Practice Development: Mainstreaming and integration.
- Changing Social Relations: Soft, Hard and Harder.



# Lessons for here? (1)

- **Lessons cannot be simply copied.** Northern Ireland setting includes a more difficult connection of sectarianism to division over political legitimacy, history of violence including emergency legislation and paramilitarism, discrimination, historic continuity, territorial separation.
- **Chronic social issues cannot be resolved by pilot projects, community initiatives and gestures alone.**
- **Progress depends on clarity on values, including the primacy of the rule of law and the withdrawal of all remaining implicit or tacit permission for violence.**
- **The Scottish approach to tackling sectarianism identified equality, violence and threat and social cohesion as the critical measure of health.**
- **Changing attitudes and behaviour on a contentious social issue take time and persistence.** The engagement approach of the Scottish Advisory Group suggests that the creation of a constituency for action may be a fruitful role for civic contribution.
- **Indicators and milestones may be as important as agreement on long-term goals.**



# Five Lessons From Scotland

- **A comprehensive policy community is essential**
- **Legislation and political leadership are necessary but insufficient instruments.**
- **Long term planning and action:**
- **Independent Assessment and Evidence Base**
- **Measuring Success by Democratic Values: Glass Ceilings, Glass Bottles and Glass Curtains.**





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